



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **LIKELY BELMONT STAKES FAVORITE ESSENTIAL QUALITY WORKS HALF-MILE IN :59.40 SATURDAY MORNING AT CHURCHILL DOWNS**

**LOUISVILLE, KY (Saturday, May 29, 2021)** – Godolphin's champion colt **Essential Quality**, the likely favorite for next Saturday's Belmont Stakes (Grade I), completed his major preparation for the third jewel of racing's Triple Crown with a swift five-furlong move in :59.40 Saturday morning at Churchill Downs. It was the fastest of 43 works at the distance.

With regular exercise rider **Edvin Vargas** in the irons, Essential Quality breezed outside of multiple graded stakes-winning filly **Bonny South** through fractions of :12.20, :23:80 and :46.60. The duo galloped out six furlongs together in 1:12.80.

"He's ready," trainer **Brad Cox** said confidently as Essential Quality was completing his work. The fourth-place finisher of the Kentucky Derby (GI) will van to Belmont Park early next week.

"Overall, it was a very good move," Cox said. "Both horses are definitely ready to run. I got back to the barn and Essential's rider, who has been on him since last fall, said how easily he got around there. It didn't take anything out of him. It's a real positive sign when you have a work like that leading into the Belmont. He's still a pretty lightly raced horse but has faced adversity in his previous races, which is good going into a Triple Crown race. I think the distance will suit him very well being a son of Tapit."

Cox had a busy morning on the Churchill Downs work tab where several of his stable stars recorded published workouts including multiple Grade I winner **Shedaresthedevil** (five furlongs, 1:00.60), Kentucky Derby runner-up **Mandaloun** (five furlongs, 1:00.20) and undefeated **Australasia** who breezed in company with multiple Grade II winner **Travel Column** (four furlongs, :48.80).

Multiple Grade I winner **Knicks Go**, another top horse from the Cox barn, had a swift 1 ½-mile gallop at 9:15 a.m. and is scheduled to breeze Sunday.

**THREE LUCRATIVE CARRYOVERS TO CHASE SATURDAY AT CHURCHILL DOWNS** – Bettors have three lucrative carryovers to chase Saturday at Churchill Downs on the 11-race Stephen Foster Preview Day program: \$150,655 in the 20-cent Derby City 6; \$73,634 in the 50-cent Late Pick 5; and \$5,377 in the \$1 Super Hi 5.

There is a mandatory payout in Saturday's 20-cent Derby City 6 and the jackpot was \$150,655 at the conclusion of Friday's action. All monies will be distributed Saturday to ticket holders with the most winners in the six-race series. Track officials estimate the force-out of Saturday's total Derby City 6 pool could challenge \$750,000 with new money.

Takeout on the Derby City 6, which will cover Races 6-11 starting at 3:18 p.m. (all times Eastern) and only costs 20 cents per combination, is just 15 percent – one of the lowest multi-race wager takeout rates in American racing.

Saturday's Derby City 6 sequence features the \$150,000 Blame for 4-year-olds and up at 1 1/8 miles (seven entries); the \$150,000 Shawnee for fillies and mares at 1 1/16 miles (eight entries); the \$150,000 Regret (Grade III) for 3-year-old fillies at 1 1/8 miles on turf (nine entries); \$150,000 Matt Winn (GI) for 3-year-olds at 1 1/16 miles (eight entries); \$150,000 Aristides for 4-year-olds and up at six furlongs (10 entries); and \$110,000 Douglas Park Overnight Stakes for 4-year-olds and up at 1 1/16 miles on turf (nine entries).

The 50-cent Late Pick 5 with a \$73,634 carryover will cover the last five races on the card. The \$1 Super Hi 5 with a \$5,377 carryover is staged on the final race of the day.

Past performances are available at [www.Brisnet.com](http://www.Brisnet.com) or [www.ChurchillDowns.com/Handicapping](http://www.ChurchillDowns.com/Handicapping). Fans can wager on the Derby City 6 at Churchill Downs; [www.TwinSpires.com](http://www.TwinSpires.com), the official ADW of Churchill Downs Incorporated; other online wagering outlets; and select satellite betting centers throughout North America.

Churchill Downs' admission gates will open at 11:30 a.m. and tickets, starting at \$5, are available on [www.ChurchillDowns.com/tickets](http://www.ChurchillDowns.com/tickets). The first of 11 races is 12:45 p.m. and the finale is scheduled for 5:58 p.m.

All 11 races on the Stephen Foster Preview Day card at Churchill Downs are scheduled to be televised on Fox Sports 2 from 12:30-6 p.m. as part of the "America's Day at the Races" coverage produced by the New York Racing Association.

**DOWN THE STRETCH** – Racing continued Saturday at Churchill Downs with a first post of 12:45 p.m. There will be a special nine-race Monday card at Churchill Downs in honor of the Memorial Day holiday weekend. ... For more information and to purchase tickets for the Spring Meet, visit [www.churchilldowns.com](http://www.churchilldowns.com).

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